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Internal Security Report No 'Witch Hunt'

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A conservative think tank called the Heritage Foundation has stirred a hornet's nest of sorts with a series of policy proposals submitted to the Reagan Administration.

The Heritage suggestion that drew the widest notice—and created the biggest furor—was a recommendation that the nation's intelligence and internal security apparatus be refurbished. In a detailed critique of the current status of the CIA, FBI and other relevant agencies, the report concluded that our intelligence services are weak, that counterintelligence (defense against foreign intelligence operatives) has been "virtually dismantled" and that the nation's internal security functions require a sharp upgrading.

The cries of alarm provoked by this analysis have been ear-splitting. The notion that we should erect defenses against subversion and improve our foreign information-gathering has been described, and blasted, as a projected return to "blacklists," "witch hunts," and other allegedly nefarious tactics of the past.

To read such statements, one could only suppose there is no such thing as Communist espionage and policy subversion in the world—or that, if there is, we have sufficient defenses against it as matters stand. That the facts of the case are decidedly otherwise may be readily gleaned from a quick review of recent items in the news:

- In the past few years, the number of Soviet and other Eastern bloc personnel stationed on U.S. soil has increased dramatically—to something like 1,900 people. A large percentage of these, perhaps as many as 75 per cent, are agents of the Communist intelligence services. In addition, some 50,000 seamen from the Soviet bloc touch down at American ports each year, and we have no effective way of keeping track of them.

- It is well known that operatives of the Soviet KGB are actively plying their trade in the Nation's Capital. There have been numerous reports of Soviet and East German efforts to contact, influence, or plant operatives in the offices of U.S. legislators. Also, it is known that the Soviets have conducted electronic surveillance of our citizens.

- Cuban influence in the United States was revealed in the case of Orlando Letelier, former official in the Marxist Allende regime in Chile, killed in a bomb blast in September 1976. Papers discovered in his attache case by the Washington police showed he had been in continuing contact with Cuban intelligence agents, that he had been receiving \$1,000 a month from Havana to sustain his activities in the United States, and that some of this money had been used to finance a trip abroad by an American congressman.

- A persistent campaign has been conducted by a group of activists including CIA defector Philip Agee (who is quoted as voicing sympathy with communism and the KGB) to expose and disrupt the operations of our intelligence agencies, an effort which has been powerfully aided by certain elements in the media.

- Despite these and other similar manifestations, the internal security and counter-intelligence agencies of our government have been effectively dismantled. The House and Senate Internal Security committees have been abolished, the Subversive Activities Control Board has been scrapped, the FBI and CIA have been subjected to merciless bombardment and crippling restrictions.

- So far has the emasculation of the FBI proceeded that the bureau does not even keep files from the public record on the Progressive Labor party, a Marxist revolutionary outfit that has as part of its program the infiltration of our uniformed services, or conduct surveillance of the Socialist Workers party, a Trotsky Communist group with international connections. Recently, two former FBI officials were convicted for surreptitious entries in an attempt to track down the violence-prone—and Cuban-connected—Weather Underground.

- The Civil Service Commission has adopted as a standard policy the rule that it is a violation of one's constitutional rights even to ask a prospective employee of the federal government if he or she is a member of the Communist party.

As the Heritage analysis sums up the situation: "There is a widespread misconception abroad that the internal security functions of the United States are adequate (in fact, they are virtually nonexistent), that they have been irresponsibly abused in the past (in fact, the United States has probably the best record of concern for civil liberties and privacy in human history), and that there is no serious threat to our internal security today (in fact, the threat to the internal security of the republic is greater today than at any time since World War II...)"

None of which sounds very much like witch hunts, and all of which sounds very much like a total collapse of the internal security and intelligence function, to which the Heritage report is most sensibly addressed.